



Promoting Good School Attendance

Education Services

**School
Attendance Team**

September 2021

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the appendices outlined below

Appendix 1	DfE Legal Guidance School Attendance – issued August 2020
Appendix 1a	Addendum - Recording attendance in relation to COVID-19 during the 2021 to 2022
Appendix 1c	Integris G2 Logging Messages Guidance
Appendix 2	School Attendance Orders
Appendix 3	Elective Home Education Policy
Appendix 4	No longer issued from the Attendance Service Team - further information regarding reduced timetables can be requested from the inclusion/exclusion team
Appendix 5	Model School Attendance Policy
Appendix 6	Code of Conduct for the Issuing of Penalty Notices
Appendix 6a	Penalty Notice Flow Charts, Forms and Letter Templates
Appendix 6b	Pre-Prosecution Meeting Record Template
Appendix 7	School Attendance Team Guidance regarding Authorised/Unauthorised Absence
Appendix 7a	Guidance on Religious Observance Absence
Appendix 8	Universal Translation Sheet
Appendix 9	Request for AS Involvement Form
Appendix 9a	Referral Form for 444 (1) (1a) Prosecution
Appendix 10	AO Home-School Meeting Record Template
Appendix 10a	AO Home-School Attendance Agreement Template
Appendix 11	School Attendance Team Scale of Charges
Appendix 12	Death of a Child – please send details to the Safeguarding Team from September 2021

Part A

Background and Context

All references to “Schools” also include other educational settings

- 1.1 Peterborough City Council (PCC) (The Local Authority/LA) considers that school attendance, and the improvement of it, is an integral part of our raising achievement agenda. We are committed to working in partnership with all schools to achieve improved rates of attendance and to reduce rates of persistent absence across the city.

We believe that in order to bring about significant educational improvement good habits need to be formed at an early age. It is vital that robust arrangements are in place to support pupils at all stages. Parents and carers whose own experience of school may have been less than positive must be encouraged to see the value of educational opportunities for their children.

- 1.2 This document, and the appendices to it, has three functions:-
- To set out the aims and objectives of the LA in seeking to ensure that pupil attendance is given a high priority in Peterborough schools;
 - To outline the service which is available to support schools in maximising attendance;
 - To provide practical guidance for schools in ensuring best practice, including advice on the administering of registration.
- 1.3 Reducing levels of Overall Absence (OA) and Persistent Absence (PA) are key priorities of the School Attendance Team. Our aims as a service are that both OA and PA should be at least in the top 3 when compared to Local Statistical Neighbours (SN), above the SN average and at least in line with the national average.
- 1.4 The tables below show the progress which is being made towards achieving these ambitions:

	Overall Absence %			Persistent Absence %		
	Pb	National	SNs	Pb	National	SNs
2013/14	4.7 (+0.2%)	4.5	4.6	3.6 (=)	3.6	4.2
2014/15	4.7 (+0.1%)	4.6	4.9	4.0 (+0.3%)	3.7	4.4
Ranking			3rd			4th
2015/16	4.6 (=)	4.6	4.8	10.8 (+0.3%)	10.5	11.7
Ranking			3rd			3rd
2016/17	4.7 (=)	4.7	4.9	11.2 (+0.4%)	10.8	12.0
Ranking			2nd			2nd
2017/18	4.8 (=)	4.8	5.0	11.6 (+0.4%)	11.2	12.3
Ranking			2nd			2nd
2018/19	4.8 (+0.1)	4.7	4.8	10.9 (=)	10.9	11.4
Ranking			3rd			2nd
2019/20	Due to the pandemic (Covid 19) there was no full year statistical release					

Attendance Outcomes by Phase

Primary Schools

	Overall Absence %			Persistent Absence %		
	Pb	National	SNs	Pb	National	SNs
2013/14	4.0 (-0.1%)	4.1	4.1	1.7 (-0.2%)	1.9	2.3
2014/15	4.1 (+0.1%)	4.0	4.9	2.0 (-0.1%)	2.1	2.5
Ranking			2nd			3rd
2015/16	4.0 (=)	4.0	4.1	8.4 (+0.2%)	8.2	9.2
Ranking			2nd			3rd
2016/17	4.0 (=)	4.0	4.2	8.4 (+0.1%)	8.3	9.2
Ranking			2nd			2nd
2017/18	4.2 (=)	4.2	4.3	9.0 (+0.3)	8.7	9.6
Ranking			2nd			2nd
2018/19	4.2 (+0.2)	4.0	4.2	9.1 (+0.9)	8.2	9.4
Ranking			2nd			3rd
2019/20	Due to the pandemic (Covid 19) there was no full year statistical release					

Secondary Schools

	Overall Absence %			Persistent Absence %		
	Pb	National	SNs	Pb	National	SNs
2013/14	5.5 (+0.3%)	5.2	5.5	6.0 (+0.7%)	5.3	6.2
2014/15	5.4 (+0.1%)	5.3	5.7	6.3 (+0.9%)	5.4	6.4
Ranking			4 th			4 th
2015/16	5.3 (+0.1%)	5.2	5.6	13.8 (+0.7%)	13.1	14.7
Ranking			2nd			5 th
2016/17	5.5 (+0.1%)	5.4	5.7	14.5 (+1.0%)	13.5	15.1
Ranking			3rd			5 th
2017/18	5.5 (=)	5.5	5.8	14.6 (+0.7)	13.9	15.3
Ranking			2nd			2nd
2018/19	5.4 (-0.1)	5.5	5.4	13.8 (+0.1)	13.7	13.9
Ranking			2nd			3rd
2019/20	Due to the pandemic (Covid 19) there was no full year statistical release					

Special Schools

	Overall Absence %			Persistent Absence %		
	Pb	National	SNs	Pb	National	SNs
2013/14	7.6 (-1.4%)	9.0	NA	13.1 (-1.5%)	14.6	NA
2014/15	9.5 (+0.1%)	9.4	10.0	15.5 (+0.1%)	15.4	17.0
Ranking			6 th			4 th
2015/16	9.0 (-0.1%)	9.1	9.5	23.0 (-1.4%)	24.4	28.0
Ranking			6 th			1 st
2016/17	9.5 (-0.2%)	9.7	10.3	27.7 (-0.8%)	28.5	30.0
Ranking			6 th			5 th
2017/18	10.3	10.2	10.7	29.8	29.6	31.3
Ranking			8 th			6 th
2018/19	11.0 (+0.9)	10.1	10.5	28.3 (-0.5)	28.8	30.9
Ranking			4 th			2 nd
2019/20	Due to the pandemic (Covid 19) there was no full year statistical release					

- 1.5 Peterborough has a wide range of communities encompassing a variety of social contexts within which our schools exist. Schools and the LA need to be responsive to the needs of those communities, some of which experience considerable challenges.
- 1.6 All schools and parents, however, have statutory duties with respect to attendance and a targeted approach needs to be balanced with ensuring that these duties are carried out effectively with respect to all pupils.

2. Peterborough City Council Priorities

- 2.1 All schools can achieve high rates of attendance. However, even in a school where attendance is high there may be individual children who require a prompt and effective response to any problems that they are having in attending regularly. The LA has therefore set aims (as stated above) to ensure that promoting attendance is perceived to be a high priority.
- 2.2 The principal means by which improved attendance at schools and other settings is supported is through the work of the School Attendance Team. This team is an integral part of the Peterborough City Council's Education Directorate and consists of an Attendance Team Manager and two Attendance Officers.
- 2.3 The LA has a duty to enforce attendance through legal means where necessary and we consider all legal sanctions where they are appropriate.

3. Action by Peterborough City Council

- 3.1 The LA will contribute to improving attendance by:
- a) Providing high-quality advice, support and casework services to schools and other settings in order to ensure the prompt identification of children whose attendance is a cause for concern;
 - b) Deploying resources in a targeted fashion to address areas of greatest need, and having particular reference to our local priorities and objectives;
 - c) Ensuring that there is a clear rationale and explanation for the trading of this service with schools;
 - d) Working with other local and external agencies as appropriate;
 - e) Issuing Penalty Notices and pursuing Non School Attendance prosecutions as appropriate, including for Y11 students until the end of the first half term of the summer term.

4. Action by Schools

- 4.1 School staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are in the front line of the drive to improve attendance. While PCC staff can make a valuable contribution, teachers and others who work in schools are in daily contact with pupils and forge effective links with parents/carers at a local level. It is essential that the need to promote good attendance is recognised by and at every school;
- 4.2 School Responsibilities - school staff need to be aware that there are various legal requirements which define how attendance and registration should be managed.

There is an expectation that the school will inform the LA of pupils whose attendance rate falls below **96%** and of any other children with regular patterns of absence. All schools must keep both an Admission and an Attendance Register, either manually or electronically. All pupils should be on both registers if they are in attendance at the school and children may only be removed from the Admission Register in accordance with the requirements of regulations. All registers must be made available to an authorised officer of the LA when requested. ***Schools have a responsibility to report pupil absence data to the LA and the DfE;***

- 4.3 Good practice is evidenced by:
- a) Having a designated member of the school's staff and a designated member of the Governing/Trust Board holding responsibility for all attendance matters, including the setting and regular review of targets for the whole school, year / class groups and individual pupils;
 - b) Having a written school policy which sets a school target for improving attendance. This policy should set out the school's expectations and priorities, strategies for improvement, advice for parents on procedures and the role of the LA School Attendance Team. It is also good practice to ensure that the objectives of this policy are reflected in the school's Development/Improvement Plan and its outcomes are contained within the School Self Evaluation Summary to emphasise that there is a whole school approach to improving attendance (A model school attendance policy is available as **Appendix 5** of this policy);

- c) Having efficient systems of registration which encourage parents to account promptly for any absences, in accordance with legal requirements. They display a consistent approach to the classification of absences as either authorised or unauthorised;
- d) Having efficient and timely monitoring and referral procedures which ensure that pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern are identified, supported and, if required, brought to the attention of the LA;
- e) All staff having a clear understanding of attendance procedures and processes;
- f) Having strategies such as first day of absence contact, attendance incentive schemes, individual and group awards etc. in accordance with the needs of the school;
- g) Reporting rates of attendance on a regular basis to the Governing Body.

PART B

Peterborough City Council

School Attendance Team –

Principles and Protocols

1. Principles

The LA believes that regular attendance and punctuality at school is a major factor in raising achievement and reducing disaffection across the city;

The LA has a duty to provide advice for schools, parents/carers and pupils on matters relating to pupil attendance and to bring prosecutions against the parents of pupils with poor school attendance;

The School Attendance Team is the agency through which the LA discharges these responsibilities.

2. Protocols

- 2.1 Attendance Officers are available to work with staff in schools and have a great deal of expertise and experience in this area;
- 2.2 Attendance Officers may work with schools to analyse data, to identify pupils where poor attendance is a barrier to learning or who are at risk of becoming persistent absentees and to help schools to complete attendance data returns where appropriate;
- 2.3 Upon request and referral Attendance Officers may attend School Attendance Meetings (SAMs) and offer advice and guidance regarding the issuing of Penalty Notices;
- 2.4 Our primary course of action to improve rates of attendance and reduce persistent absence, where advice and guidance has failed to bring about improvement, is through the issuing of penalty notices and pursuance of Non School Attendance prosecutions;
- 2.5 We will oversee the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence without exceptional circumstances and any unauthorised absences of at least 8 sessions in a minimum eight week period. For persistent absence we will pursue prosecution for Non School Attendance. Please see "Penalty Notice Code of Conduct" – **Appendix 6**
- 2.6 Our determination to pursue unauthorised and persistent absence through the use of legal measures is underlined by the data below, outlining the trend for the number of penalty notices requested by schools and approved/issued by the LA. The increases seen during recent academic years is a signal of our intent to use all available measures to support our schools in improving attendance, including prosecution as a last resort where necessary:

Year	Number of Schools who issue PN's	% of Total Schools
2015/16	62	83
2016/17	49	65
2017/18	61	81
2018/19	67	81
2019/20	68	84
2020/21	56	70

Reduction in schools requesting PN's is most likely due to Covid-19

2.7 Penalty Notices (Leave of Absence and Non School Attendance - NSA) Issued:

Month	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*	2020/21*
September	180	240	52	48	326	9
October	278	243	124	482	442	56
November	168	119	209	333	152	30
December	89	19	123	106	305	67
January	139	37	264	281	268	6
February	137	50	143	233	208	2
March	105	35	162	169	188	0
April	160	25	134	158	0	47
May	282	62	292	449	0	121
June	230	69	268	310	0	83
July/August	333	68	722	602	0	187
Total number of Penalty Notices issued	2101	967	2493	3171	1891	608
Total number of pupils for whom Penalty Notices were issued	1203	555	1464	2057	1126	376

*2019/20 and 2020/21 data reflects the changes made due to government enforced lockdowns and school closers and disapplication of legislation preventing issue of penalty notice/legal action due to Covid 19

Leave of Absence (Holiday) Penalty Notices

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of PN's issued	1883	580	2107	2799	1740	485
PN's withdrawn	127	113	113	196	137	32
PN'S Paid	1573	467	1831	2532	1516	368
PN's sent to prosecution	183	0	163	183	198	46

NSA Penalty Notices (Persistent Absenteeism)

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of PN's issued	216	359	386	363	148	123
PN's withdrawn	30	57	57	56	17	3
PN'S Paid	106	178	190	187	68	42
PN's sent to prosecution	80	124	139	131	70	38

3. Competences and Practices

In order to ensure the effective discharge of its responsibilities, the staff of the School Attendance Team are expected to demonstrate the following core competencies and practices:

- The ability to communicate and engage with children, young people, parents and carers, schools, colleagues from statutory and voluntary agencies and plan appropriate responses and interventions;
- Having appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to respond effectively to addressing attendance issues in an organised and considered way;
- Being able to promote school attendance and support parents / carers to meet their responsibilities in securing regular school attendance;
- Having the necessary knowledge and skills to protect young people from abuse and exploitation, through the communication of any concerns to appropriate colleagues.

4. Advice and Guidance

The School Attendance Team has in place mechanisms through which good practice in the improvement of pupil attendance may be collected and disseminated. We shall work in partnership with schools and other agencies to offer advice and guidance on the development of School Attendance Policies and the promotion of regular attendance, providing additional support to schools who may encounter difficulties in this area.

5. Partnership Working Criteria

There is a need for early identification of poor school attendance.

There is an expectation that schools will have a clear policy on attendance and punctuality which gives explanation of school action to be taken prior to referral to the School Attendance Team and clear criteria for Attendance Officer intervention;

School staff and Attendance Officers, at the start of each academic year, should agree a regular and protected timetable for advice and support meetings, as appropriate;

The School Attendance Team will allocate Attendance Officer time and deployment based upon greatest need;

The Attendance Officer will maintain a written record of agreed advice and support. The school and the Attendance Officer will retain copies at the end of each meeting. The Attendance Officer will expect to be given relevant information on pupils being referred (e.g. attendance, family circumstances, any child protection issues, completion of CAF where appropriate, addresses, dates of birth etc.) as well as the actions which have already been taken by the school prior to the referral (e.g. letters, phone calls, meetings etc.);

The Attendance Officer will, in agreement with school staff, prioritise work to ensure that time is targeted towards the most urgent cases first;

The School Attendance Team aims to monitor rates of attendance and persistent absence on a

termly basis with a full evaluation annually, but requires the support of schools to do this;

Appropriate use of the Court System will be considered jointly by the Attendance Officer and school staff where a case of non-attendance at school is persistent, although it is only the LA who can sanction a prosecution;

The School Attendance Team and schools will give due consideration to the raising of attainment and attendance of Children in Care and those with SEND in the same way as for all pupils.

6. Data Collection

In order to improve the efficiency of the School Attendance Team whilst continuing to reduce the data burden on schools, I ask that all schools create a generic 'Attendance' user account on your MIS databases (where applicable) so that everyone in the School Attendance Team can use to access basic pupil and attendance information. This will enable us to create reports directly from the system as and when required, without having to contact the school and also support schools in Attendance cases.

Appendix 1a is a step by step guide explaining how to set up the Integris G2 user account for the service. Providing that the attached guidance is followed correctly, the School Attendance Team will have read-only access to basic pupil details and the attendance module.

Once the user account has been created, please email details of the username and password to asadmin@peterborough.gov.uk (please ensure that security of the password is of paramount importance and should not be in the same email as the username).

Please note that if you create an Integris G2 log on for the School Attendance Team you are agreeing to them accessing pupil level data as and when necessary.

We are very grateful to those schools who do not use Integris G2 for forwarding the latest outcomes data to us upon request.

For those schools who have transferred to **Scholarpack or Pupil Asset**, please can you set up a basic Admin account and email the Username, Password and the web address (in separate emails for security) to your linked officer.

7. Compliments and Complaints Procedure

It is important that any compliments, concerns or complaints about service delivery or Attendance Officers are received and responded to fairly and quickly.

The aim of this procedure is to:

- Recognise a good service to schools where this is provided;
- Continue to provide an efficient service;
- Maintain positive and productive working relationships;
- Ensure that Attendance Officers are supported.

If a school would like to record their response to a good level of service received, or, finds it necessary to question the service delivery or the actions of an Attendance Officer, the

designated member of staff should:

1. Contact the Attendance Team Manager or the Strategic Admissions and Attendance Manager if the wish to record a good level of service is received;
2. Speak to the Attendance Officer in the first instance about the issue if there is a concern.

If unresolved:

3. Consult with the immediate line manager Attendance Team Manager or the Strategic Admissions and Attendance Manager who, along with the designated member of staff, will keep a written record of the outcome and period over which the matter will be dealt with.

Where there are continuing concerns:

4. Send a written referral to the Assistant Director - Education who will identify an appropriate person to carry out an investigation and a written response will be provided within an agreed timescale;

This procedure will also apply to compliments and complaints from parents/carers, governors and other services and agencies.

This policy and its appendices will be reviewed and updated annually.

Karen Beaton

Strategic Lead for Admissions and Attendance.

For and on behalf of the PCC School Attendance Team

September 2021

